

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Clean Your Laundry Habits

The National Park Service estimates that the average family does about 300 loads of laundry per year, which amounts to about 12,300 gallons of water per household. That's a lot of water, not to mention the heavy energy use that comes with using washers and dryers, and the hazardous chemicals that can be found in certain detergents and dryer sheets. Thankfully, there are many ways you can change your laundry habits to protect your family's health and the environment.

Be an Energy Star: Consider switching to an Energy Star-qualified front-loading washing machine. Front-loading machines use approximately half the water of a top-loading washer. Energy Star machines use 33% less water each cycle, and they often have a longer life span, saving an average of \$380 in maintenance and operating costs, according to the [Energy Star website](#). Energy Star offers rebates on select appliances up to \$50.

Fully loaded: Wearing clothes more than once is another great way to use less water and energy. Even Levi's Jeans recommends washing your jeans every other week. Waiting to do laundry until you have a full load is another way to help the environment. Many washing machines have cycles for smaller loads, which use less water. So, if you need to wash before a full load, be sure to adjust your machine cycle.

Get out of hot water: You don't need to use hot water to have clean clothes. The majority of the energy your washer uses is to heat the water. Your washing machine most likely has a knob for water temperature. Make sure it's set to cold! Using cold water significantly reduces your carbon footprint. According to the EPA, if a family of four washed five loads of laundry in cold water per week, this would prevent 182 pounds of carbon dioxide being emitted into the atmosphere each year. [That is equivalent to the amount of energy required to drive a car 202 miles or charge a smartphone 10,527 times.](#)

Hang it out to dry: Save money and energy by line drying your clothes. Since one dryer emits about a ton of carbon dioxide each year, it will really make a difference. An added bonus: The quality of your clothes last longer when you line dry, because the dryer causes most of the wear and tear. Also, hanging your clothes up right after washing may prevent a trip to the dry cleaners or the need to iron your clothes. If you do use the dryer, clean out the lint trap. Keeping the trap clean reduces the amount of time it takes for your clothes to dry.

Detergent: Look for detergent that is readily biodegradable, phosphate-free and plant-based (rather than petroleum-based). These detergents are healthier for the planet and your skin, too. There are many other alternatives to detergent. For example, fabric softener can be replaced with a cup of white

vinegar that is added to the washer during the rinse cycle. Nontoxic detergent can also be made at home with castile soap and borax (see recipe below).

DIY Powder Detergent Recipe

Ingredients

1 cup grated Castile bar soap (scented or unscented)

1 cup borax

1 cup super washing soda

Optional: 15 drops of your favorite essential oils (lavender, citrus, pine or tea tree are preferred)

Add the ingredients to a glass jar or other container, cover the jar and shake to mix. Use one to two tablespoons per full load for best results.

To learn more about your carbon footprint, visit the [EPA's household carbon footprint calculator](#).

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